CLAIMS

1.   A method for compressing message headers, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a message including an uncompressed header, a message including a compressed header or a request to support header compression, and in response,

determining impact of header compression on performance, and

if favorable, supporting header compression for subsequent communications, and

if unfavorable, refusing to support header compression for subsequent communications.

2.   A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the receiving step comprises the step of receiving a message including an uncompressed header, and if the impact of header compression on performance is determined to be favorable, then returning an identifier for use in a compressed header, said identifier identifying a reference header.

3.   A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the receiving step comprises the step of receiving a message including a compressed header comprising an identifier to a reference, uncompressed header and changes from said reference header.

4.   A method as set forth in claim 3 wherein if the impact of header compression on performance is determined to be favorable, then forming another uncompressed header based on said reference header and said changes.

5.   A method as set forth in claim 4 wherein if the impact of header compression on performance is determined to be favorable, then handling said message and returning another identifier for said other uncompressed header, said other identifier for use in another compressed header.

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6.   A computer program product for compressing message headers, said computer program product comprising:

a computer readable medium;

first program instructions to receive a message including an uncompressed header, a message including a compressed header or a request to support header compression, and in response,

second program instructions to determine impact of header compression on performance, and

if favorable, supporting header compression for subsequent communications, and

if unfavorable, refusing to support header compression for subsequent communications; and wherein

said first and second program instructions are recorded on said medium.

7.   A computer program product as set forth in claim 6 wherein said first program instructions receive a message including an uncompressed header, and if the impact of header compression on performance is determined to be favorable, then said first program instructions return an identifier for use in a compressed header, said identifier identifying a reference header.

8.   A computer program product as set forth in claim 6 wherein said first program instructions receive a message including a compressed header comprising an identifier to a reference, uncompressed header and changes from said reference header.

9.   A computer program product as set forth in claim 8 wherein if the impact of header compression on performance is determined to be favorable, then further comprising third program instructions to form another uncompressed header based on said reference header and said changes; and wherein said third program instructions are recorded on said medium.

10.   A method for compressing message headers, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a message including a compressed header;

determining impact of header compression on performance, and

if favorable, handling said message, and

if unfavorable, refusing to handle said message.

11.   A method as set forth in claim 10 wherein said compressed header includes an identifier to a reference header and changes relative to said reference header.

12.   A method as set forth in claim 10 wherein if the impact of header compression on performance is favorable, further comprising the step of reconstructing said message with an uncompressed header based on said reference header and said changes, before the step of handling said message.

13.   A method for compressing message headers, said method comprising the steps of:

a server receiving a message including a compressed header;

said server determining whether said server has sufficient memory or storage to support header compression, and

if so, handling said message, and

if not, refusing to handle said message or notifying a sender of said message that said server will not support header compression for subsequent messages.

14.   A method as set forth in claim 13 wherein compression for said compressed header requires that said server store a reference header.

15.   A method as set forth in claim 12 wherein said compressed header comprises an identifier to a reference, uncompressed header and changes relative to said reference header, and if said server has sufficient memory or storage to support header compression, further comprising the steps of:

forming an uncompressed header based on said compressed header; and

returning to a sender of said message an identifier of said uncompressed header to be used for a subsequent compressed header.

16.   A method for compressing message headers, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a message including an uncompressed header, a message including a compressed header or a request to support header compression, and in response,

determining if there is sufficient storage available to support header compression, and

if so, supporting header compression for subsequent communications, and

if not, refusing to support header compression for subsequent communications.

17.   A method as set forth in claim 16 wherein the receiving step comprises the step of receiving a message including an uncompressed header, and if there is sufficient storage available to support header compression, then returning an identifier for said uncompressed header, said identifier for use in subsequent compressed headers corresponding in large measure to said uncompressed header.

18.   A method as set forth in claim 16 wherein said compressed header includes an identifier to a reference, uncompressed header and changes relative to said reference header, and the receiving step comprises the step of receiving a message including a compressed header, and if there is sufficient storage available to support header compression, then generating another uncompressed header based on said reference header and said changes.

19.   A method as set forth in claim 18 further comprising the steps of handling said message and returning an identifier for said generated uncompressed header.